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BROADCASTERS VICTORY COUNCIL

MUNSEY BUILDING

WASHINGTON, D. C.

EXECUTIVE 2113

Number 31

September 2, 1942.

MADE TO YOUR SPECIFICATIONS **

Radio told it to the Marines the other day when that worthy fighting organization dispatched questionnaires amongst the broadcasting industry and asked program people just what kind of shows they'd like best to have the Marines build for them. The possibilities ran quite a gamut, from five-minute quickies and soul-stirring spots to epic dramatizations on two battle-wracked sides of a vinclite disk.

The response to this survey was, we're told, "gratifying". In other words, the Marines are happy about it. A number of detailed and intelligent suggestions stemmed from broadcasters whom - we strongly suspect - were no little surprised to have one of Uncle Sam's military forces actually come 'round and ask what they wanted most. Anyhow, radio told the Marines, and the consensus of replies pleaded for a 15-minute dramatic show built closely as possible to the day-by-day headlines. In other words, the Marines were hell-raisers at Tripoli and Vera Cruz, but people today want to hear about what they're doing today.

So out of it all, we're pleased to report, comes a brand new Marine Corps series of 26 transcribed Quarter hour shows, available to every station beginning about October 1. The aim, of course, is recruiting. Each broadcast will feature current Marine exploits, right up to the minute, and showing what America's sea-soldiers are achieving in this war. To our jaded imagination, it ought to be high-speed entertainment, well worth the air-time you give it, and an encouraging echo of the tough work American Marines are performing in all the cobwebby corners of the world.

PROOF OF PATRIOTISM **

The Office of Civilian Defense asks us to tell you to tell your listeners that if an air-raid warden comes around in the next few days and asks them whether they live in a "V-Home" - it's OK. He's perfectly sane. In fact he's co-operating with a nationwide drive to marshall all American homeowners into a personal fight against the enemy.

A "V-Home" is a home where the people do five separate and important things. They (1) follow instructions of the local air-raid warden, (2) conserve food, clothing, transportation and health, (3) salvage essential materials, (4) refuse to spread rumors, and (5) buy War Bonds and Stamps regularly.

The OCD is giving a "V-Home" certificate to every family that lives up to these five requirements. They aren't easy to get. The OCD isn't going to toss them around like cigar store coupons. That's why the wardens are politely asking questions at each home in their territories. The "V-Home" certificate is a badge of honor, and it has to be earned.

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Radio's part in the campaign shapes up like this. Get in touch with your local civilian defense council - the same one you should have contacted about copies of "What Can I Do" (BVC Newsletter #30) - and find out where the "V-Homes" drive stands in your community.

The OCD at Washington has sent a "radio kit" to all local defense councils in towns where stations are extant. These pass first through regional offices then down to the individual communities. The process takes about two weeks, which means that by half-past September there should be a "V-Home" drive getting underway in your area. Incidentally, it's on the OWI Allocation Plan from September 21 to 27.

Have a talk with your nearest OCD office. Radio, as we see it, should wise up the listening audience in advance so that when the warden comes a-tapping on the door, and asks if they have a "V-Home", people won't think he's merely commenting on the small size of their house - and with a speech impediment at that.

LET'S BE SENSIBLE **

Despite the progress aviation has made in the past decade or two, we never seem to get very far beyond the one-cylinder reasoning that an airplane crash is bigger news than a train wreck or a bus smash-up. And the sudden increase of flying brought about by this war has done nothing to mature our journalistic thinking along these lines.

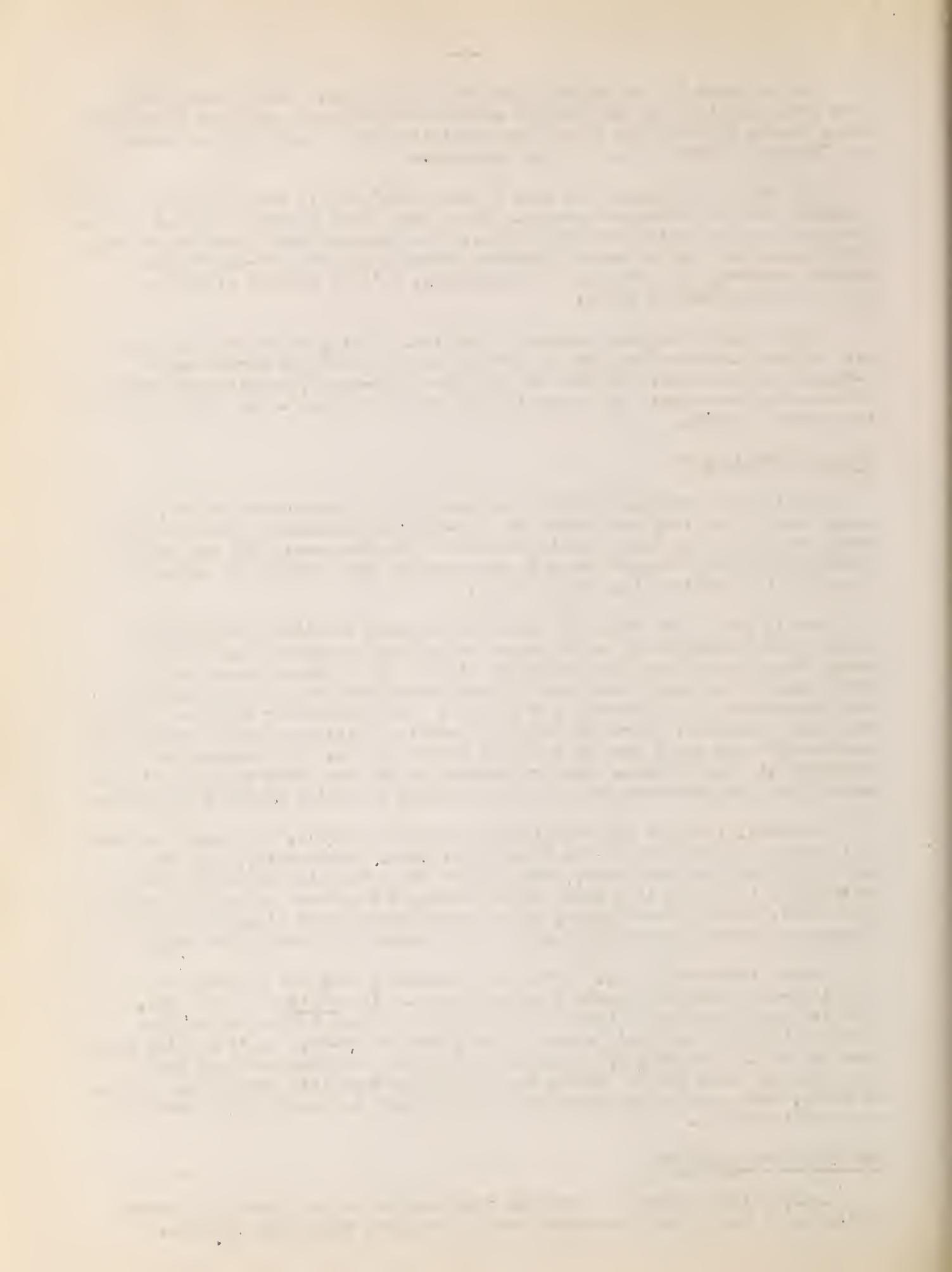
Lately there have been some bad plane crashes - military ships that smacked into mountaintops or otherwise dented the landscape. And not a few radio commentators have been guilty of playing these mishaps up to the stratosphere - placing them ahead of many other items that are undoubtedly more newsworthy in the overall war picture. The spectacular approach is bad for several reasons. First of all, the amount of flying in this country has accelerated many times over in the past twelve months. A percentage of accidents is unavoidable. More remarkable is the fact that they haven't increased as fast proportionately as the quantity of flying that's being done.

Secondly, it's bad for recruiting and bad for morale. The Army and Navy can't very well sign up all the fledglings, (who, incidentally, make the best flyers but in most cases, have to have the permission of their parents to enlist), they need if a bunch of brass-lunged radio men go yelling to the four winds, over and over again, that another bomber just ripped the top off a house in Kohokus and charred eight crew members to a fine golden crisp.

Don't misunderstand us. We're not advocating that you suppress or chocolate-coat anything that's legitimate news. It should go on the air. If a training plane falls into the main street of your town - say so, but calmly - the same way you'd report a fatal auto smash-up. Don't magnify such news out of all proportion, repeating it (as some commentators have done) more than 24 hours later. Flying is safer today than it's ever been. Safer, we think, than some of the people who got a chance to sound off in front of an open microphone.

TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT***

Look, folks. We've gone through this routine so many times that we're beginning to feel like a monologue act on the Keith vaudeville circuit.



The Code of Wartime Practices for American Broadcasters is a valid document, subscribed to in good faith by broadcasters and government alike. It was drawn up for a purpose that's just as important to the individual broadcaster as it is to Uncle Sam. Why can't we acquaint ourselves with its provisions and be guided accordingly?

In the last three weeks we've ticked off on our chubby fingers four different violations of this Code, each one big enough to be worried about. It isn't that people want to violate it. They just don't watch what they're doing, or they forget, or they never took the trouble to learn in the first place.

Cause of current tirade is a network proposition. It seems that last Saturday night a Network scheduled a Bond and Stamp show which, in itself, is a swell idea. But...alas...the network proceeded to notify all its member stations in advance that they could cut into the broadcast locally with the names of people who called in to buy War Bonds and Stamps. Give amounts, addresses and everything.

Just a day or so before the show was ready to be presented, somebody remembered to check the Office of Censorship. Of course such a program technique, under terms of the Code, is about as acceptable as a pocket flash at a church supper.

Actually, as we understand it, the Treasury was approached by the Network on the idea, and replied that it sounded all right. The Treasury was using as a basis for its opinion a ruling that the Office of Censorship had given out previously on a fairly similar type show, and although this program was somewhat different, it was not rechecked with O. C. The Office of Censorship exists for a purpose, and when there's the vaguest miasma of doubt, it should be consulted.

The network was a very good sport about the whole thing, we are soothingly happy to report. It re-notified all its member stations who halted the announcements many of them were making, calling attention to this feature of the Bond & Stamp show. Everybody co-operated nicely, although a certain grinding of teeth was inevitable. The show went on without local plugs for local Bond-buyers.

The moral, we think, is this. The Office of Censorship simply cannot give blanket clearance on any particular types of programs. The manner of presentation, the subject material, the checks and safeguards present are all important. When in doubt - or even if in doubt as to whether you're in doubt - take it up with the Office of Censorship direct. It's the only way to be sure - not only for your own self, but for the whole industry of which you're a part.

IT'S JUST AN IDEA **

You can clip this one for your Golden Opportunity files. We hear tell that the Bituminous Coal Utilization Committee - representing all the coal producers of Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma - has earmarked something like \$2,344 as an appropriation for a "Buy Coal Now" campaign in its territory. Sanctioning the drive is the Bituminous Coal Division of the Department of the Interior, which naturally wants to see the public fill up the old coal bin right away. Transportation facilities are dwindling. Coal still rolls the

rails, but not for long.

We're hardly suggesting that stations in Maine and Oregon attempt to muscle in on this local appropriation. We think, though, that similar committees in your local area might well be receptive to a radio campaign of their own. Refer it to your commercial manager, and let us know how you make out. After all, it's to your advantage that listeners don't freeze to death.

-----BVC-----

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